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SUBJECT: JUNE 16-18 TIFA MEETINGS - DRAFT AGENDA

REF: A. (A) 05/22 SNELSIRES EMAIL TO CENTRAL ASIAN POSTS

(WITH ATTACHED DRAFT AGENDA)

¶B. (B) STATE 1132

¶C. (C) ASTANA 000497

¶11. This is an action request. Please see paragraphs 7, 8 and ¶9.

¶12. The US-Central Asia Trade and Investment Framework Agreement is our main vehicle for engaging the Central Asian countries on trade issues. In reftel B we asked posts to deliver a letter from USTR on planning for this year's TIFA Council and to solicit a decision on timing, location and agenda for the 2008 TIFA Council. As posts know, we agreed to hold the meetings June 16-18 in Dushanbe. Because of international flight schedules, we asked, and the Government of Tajikistan agreed, to adjust the schedule to begin the formal meetings on June 17. June 16 will be available for delegations to arrive in Dushanbe and to hold bilateral or other less formal contacts. The TIFA is being hosted in Dushanbe by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade Bobozoda. The US delegation will be led by Acting Assistant United States Trade Representative Mark Mowrey, and joined by State Deputy Assistant Secretary George Krol and additional representatives from USTR, State, Commerce, Homeland Security, and USAID.

¶13. We have been working closely with the host government to develop the program for the two days and believe we have developed a useful agenda. The first day will be focused on a dialogue with the business community. We expect to have a number of US firms active in the area represented either directly or via the regional US business groups. The focus of the dialogue will be trade facilitation and transport and energy infrastructure needs. The Central Asian countries will have an opportunity to present their investment environment and opportunities in the dialogue with business. We also look forward to having a government to government exchange on regional projects in the electricity sector.

¶14. On the second day we expect to have the formal TIFA Council with the morning focusing on a review of the investment environment following up on the major theme of last year's Council and a discussion of barriers to trade in the region. The afternoon will be focused on administrative measures that could ease trade, with a focus on work being facilitated by the USAID funded Regional Trade Liberalization and facilitation program to create a single processing window and approaches to make trade regulation and requirements more

readily available to traders.

¶15. We are proposing that the meeting conclude with an agreed action plan on measures each country intends to take on the issues we are discussing to improve the investment and trading environment in the region. These measures will draw from and support ongoing assistance and cooperation programs in the region. We hope to circulate a draft with some core elements of such an action plan to members at least a week prior to the TIFA Council Meeting.

¶16. We hope to have senior and robust participation from the five Central Asian TIFA member States and Afghanistan as an observer.

¶17. Embassies Ashgabat, Astana, Bishkek and Tashkent are requested to share the agenda attached to ref A with their host governments and solicit reactions, ideas and input and to share our intentions about the meeting as described above and in reftel. They are also requested to seek communication to the Government of Tajikistan and to us concerning their delegations.

¶18. We understand that the government of Turkmenistan has informed Tajikistan that its delegation will be led by the Minister of Economics and Development. The Minister of Foreign Economic Relations of Uzbekistan, Elyor Ganiev who was recently in Washington, indicated his intention to participate, but we would appreciate confirmation from Tashkent. Afghanistan has informed the hosts that Minister of Trade Farhat Ali will lead their delegation. Kazakhstan has confirmed their participation but has not indicated who will lead the delegation. We encourage the other participants to confirm their delegations at Ministerial level along with appropriate senior officials, including those who are participating in some of the ongoing USAID funded programs that will be discussed at the event.

¶19. Our next discussion of agenda and arrangements with the Government of Tajikistan is scheduled for May 29, and we would welcome responses on reactions to the proposed agenda in time for that discussion.

RICE